Castlemaine Naturalist

February 2020

Vol. 45.1 #483

Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Little Pied Cormorant feeding nestlings on the island in Lake Joanna photo by Noel Young

Needle Grass Update

Removing needle grass from the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens thoroughly and early paid off.

Eight volunteer working bees took place between 20 Oct. and 28 Nov. and as a result, in January, there was very little needle grass visible. As well as the many volunteer hours spent, a key to this success was getting the timing right for mowing – Council Parks & Gardens staff were extremely helpful and delayed mowing till we had finished weeding an area, then mowed straight away, before more needle grass heads appeared.

A 2-person working bee dug out some previously missed needle grass in an unmowed area in early January, and also tried to collect seeds of native grasses to scatter next season in the disturbed areas after weeding. But the wallaby grasses had lost most of their seeds or been mown, and the only seeding native grass that was plentiful was Common Wheat-grass (*Elymus scaber*).

Summer rain could bring a new flush of needle grass, but if it doesn't, the needle grass work in the Botanical Gardens might be finished for this season. Thankyou to all who participated.

We still need potting mix bags for putting the weeds in for the next season. Bags made of the same plastic as potting mix bags (**low**-density polyethylene – not high density polyethylene which I mistakenly put in the December *Castlemaine Naturalist*), are also OK, but not animal feed bags. To arrange collection, please ring me on 5470 5072 (between 7am and 7pm) or bring to a working bee.

Margaret Panter

Jan-Feb Observations (1942)

George Broadway

Continuing this series of specimens sent in by the readers of "Wildlife" magazine. Popular in its day, 'Wildlife" ceased publication in the mid fifties.

The following were submitted by readers in Jan/Feb 1942. Readers were busy during January and February with lots of specimens and queries. No mention of Japan's recent entry to the war threatening Australia's security.

I hope some of these are new to us, I will omit some which have already been described. There were plenty more.

Insects

Preston: Painted Apple Moth, a pest which attacks not only apples but also apricot and peach trees; and Caulfield: many other fruits and plants. The caterpillars are small and dark and covered with long tufts of hair. They are not borers but eat the leaves. The adult male is insignificant and the female is wingless, remaining on the flimsy cocoon like a fat woolly grub. When they pupate it is common for them to settle under the rails of post and rail fences. See Aug '17

Hawthorn: Coachman Moth See July '17

Sunshine: A wasp but not the stinging kind. It is a Long-tailed Wasp *Megalyra,* with a tail up to 4 times the length of the body used for inserting eggs into wood-boring grubs.

Caufield: Gum Emperor Moth, several mentions, see June '17. The largest Victorian moth. Sometimes Camberwell. The moth remains in the cocoon for many months or even years before emerging. (I once kept a Coburg cocoon on the mantelpiece for a couple of years hoping to photograph the moth as it emerged. Unfortunately at the critical moment my presence was required elsewhere so I missed it).

Tonimbuk (near Bunyip) 1. Small native bees which live in the ground.

2. The red specimen is a small ichneumon wasp and the "sting" in the tail is an egg-placer for injecting eggs into insect larvae on which this group of wasps is parasitic.

Corindhap: The small stout black beetle was one of the scarabs, all so similar that it is difficult to identify individual species. They are mostly ground dwelling scavengers. The larger specimen was a Verandah Beetle, *Saragus,* found principally in the ground under logs and stones. Feeds on rotten wood, bark and fungi.

Ararat: A cup-moth caterpillar (See Feb '18) but one of the rarer ones, not common enough to do the damage inflicted on Eucalypts by its more common relative.

Harrow: Large wood-boring grub, the larva of one of the larger Jewel beetles. (See May '17)

Brighton Your bite or sting was probably inflicted by a so-called "Blue Ant". See Jan 17. Actually a wingless wasp and tends to be found around gardens and lawns.

Moreland: Your specimen is a moth not a butterfly. Generally butterflies have knobs on the ends of their antennae and fold their wings vertically above their backs. This one is a Vine Moth, *Phalaenoides glycinae* whose caterpillars are a pest on grape and ornamental vines.

Clayton: "White ants", more properly called Termites.

Coburg: Firewood beetle Often appears in this column, See Nov '16

Williamstown,

Costerfield: Crusader Bug, identified by the narrow white cross over the grey-green back. Harmful to fruit trees, sucking the sap. (They attacked my young Eucalypts, sucking the sap from the growing tips causing them to die off).

Canterbury: It may be that the Cabbage Butterfly larvae made the mistake of crawling into your garage to pupate; the emerging butterflies had no escape.

Ringwood: The pest on the Peppermint gum is the Cup Moth caterpillar. See Feb 18. This year they are worse than I can remember.

Belgrave: *Leptops,* sometimes called Elephant Beetle because of the long trunk-like snout with jaws at the tip.

Malvern: Specimen 1 is hairy with large spiky tufts of bristles every little way along its back, a moderately distant relative of the gum Emperor Moth, it is not so common to have earned itself a common name as yet.

Specimen 2 is an elephant-grey caterpillar with a fringe of hairs low down on each side to hide the shadow of the body and so to make more perfect the camouflage of the caterpillar lying in the daytime against the branch of a tree. It is the larva of one of the "Drinker" Moths, *Pinara,* so called because the moth has a long snout for drinking instead of the customary long tongue coiled like a watch spring for sipping nectar.

Mentone: The cocoon with brown fur over the outside is that of a caterpillar which for want of a better common name we shall call the "Nettle-stinger". The caterpillar is fairly large and covered with woolly hairs which are brittle and break off if the caterpillar is handled; entering the skin they cause much irritation. When the caterpillar pupates it spins a large flimsy cocoon, then forces all the hairs through the wall from the inside so they break off and provide a form of protection. Its name is *Chelepteryx collesii.*

Bacchus Marsh: The insects found in large numbers in the Lerderderg Gorge were the male and female of the Mountain Grasshopper, *Acridopeza reticulata.* The male, large, dark speckled body and long wings can fly quite well but the female shorter and stouter, has no flying wings. When disturbed she raises the wing cases revealing the vividly coloured red and blue body beneath. Recently (1941 perhaps), a unique freak of this species was found by Mrs Edith Coleman and described by Professor Agar to the Royal Society – it was male on one side and female on the other.

Horsham; Mundalla;

Box Hill: Tree Cricket, *paragryllacris sp*. Often sent in. See Jan '17

Caldermeade: Golden Stag Beetle, *Lamprima rutilans.* One of our most beautiful beetles which used to be dried and set in gold to form brooches.

Birds

Sandringham: The crest and the scarlet feathers at the base of the tail identify the bird as an Oriental Bulbul, an aviary escape which has become established in several parts of Australia; in Sydney it has become quite a nuisance.

Westernport;

Lismore: A Banded Landrail. Landrails are nomadic birds and may appear suddenly in places where they have not been seen before. One was reported recently in the Fitzroy Gardens.

Wildflowers

Lilydale: The blue flower was the Wax-lip Orchid *Glossodia major,* which as well as being beautiful, has a sweet and delicate fragrance.

Other flowers were;- Common Spider Orchid, and Beard Orchids. Red beard, *Calochilus paludosus* and Brown Beard *Calochilus robertsonii.*

Snakes and Lizards

Murtoa: A "Blind Snake" or *Typhlops.* (See Sep 16). It is not really blind; it is distinguished from other snakes by its underground habit and being able to burrow. By the blunt head and tail with no tapering and the absence of wide scales on the belly. It is a friend to man destroying harmful insects. The little spike at end of the tail is not a sting, it is to give some purchase for burrowing.

Miscellaneous

Horsham: A scorpion .of fairly large size; no really large scorpions are found in Victoria and though ours can sting very painfully with the sting at the end of the tail, they are not regarded as really dangerous. See June '17

Windsor: Centipedes. Short of treading on them all, I can see no way of getting rid of them. They can give a rather savage bite and the bite is poisonous although it is doubtful that it would be dangerous to a human other than perhaps to a baby. Your best plan would be to keep your back yard free of rubbish.

Preston: Gordius worm. See Mar '18. Sometimes known as the Horsehair Worm because of its length. Lives in fresh water pools.

Tremont: Land Planarians. A very primitive form, feeds on Earthworms and other crawling creatures. They are slimy and no snake is ever slimy See Jan'17

Carlton: House Centipede or Johnny Hairy legs. See Aug '18. Not dangerous but useful because it dines on harmful insects.

Balwyn: Red Velvet Earth Mite See July '17. Lives in or on the ground, feeds on vegetation.

Spotswood: Horseshoe Shrimp, *Lepidurus*. Also known as "Toe-biter" and "Scale-tail" Found in temporary pools in many places. (I have been looking in temporary pools for years and have only found them once or twice). [see photo]

Buffalo River: A mouse got to your specimen before I did, leaving only an empty box with a hole in it.

Torquay: Fish Louse. One of the Isopods belonging to the Crustacea. A relative of the garden slater. Your specimen is a parasite living in the mouth of a

fish, hanging on to the tongue by means of clawed feet, and sucking blood with a wicked looking beak.

Red Cliffs: You do not mention yellow above the blue on each wing and the blue shafts in the tail but otherwise your description fits the Blue-Bonnet Parrot. *Northiella haematogaster*

Lepidurus

Cup Moth Larva

Scorpion, Kalimna

Vine Moth adult

Helena Gum Moth Larva

Birds of Sutton Grange January 2020

Nigel Harland

Had our Grandson to stay, he is six. He managed to name quite a few and learned some new ones. Might have him hooked!

Superb Fairywren	Red-browed Finch	White-browed Scrubwren
Australian Magpie	Australian Raven	Little Raven
Laughing Kookaburra	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Long-billed Corella	Crimson Rosella	Striated Pardalote
Grey Shrikethrush	New Holland Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike
Welcome Swallow	Red Wattlebird	Common Bronzewing
House Sparrow	Galah	Straw-necked Ibis

Walking together in Kalimna Park

Our speaker at the first meeting for 2020 on Friday 14th February is **Harley Douglas,** a project officer with the Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation. The Walking Together Initiative (Balak Kalik Manya) is a project within the Loddon-Campaspe Regional Partnership working with Parks Victoria, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Traditional Owners to explore better ways of interacting, using, and taking care of our national parks so they can be accessible for future generations.

Walking Together (Balak Kalik Manya) is a four-year project being delivered by the Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises (Trading as Djandak). The project seeks to increase visitation usage, connect people to nature, and improve and monitor biodiversity. The project is focusing on two sites; Wildflower Drive, Strathdale and Kalimna Park, Castlemaine. These sites have been selected because of their proximity to growing urban populations and the pressure being placed upon them by encroachment and continued misuse. Both sites currently have minimal on-ground management and do not receive the attention they deserve. The project is funded for $2.05 million dollars to develop site-specific management plans and will incorporate on-ground actions arising from the recommendations within the plan; e.g. weed management, ecological thinning, track and trail rationalisation, access control, cultural burning, revegetation, shelter construction etc.

Aboriginal rock wells, Kalimna

With help from Rakali Consulting (Elaine Bayes & Karl Just) we have completed most of the preliminary flora and fauna surveying to help inform the management plans. Next we will be looking to develop management plans, but not before a stakeholder engagement/public consultation period to ensure both the community's values and the Dja Dja Wurrung's values are represented in this project.

Observations

Richard Piesse, on a visit to Rickett's Point on 20th January, identified the following birds:

Sooty Oystercatcher, Pelican, Black Swan, Silver Gull, Caspian Tern, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron.

From your Committee:

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2020 AGM will be held at 7.30 pm on Friday 13th March, and will be followed by talk by Professor Susan Lawrence of Latrobe University on the impacts of mining on the Central Goldfields waterways. The AGM agenda will include the President's report for the 2019-20 year, the Treasurer's report, and election of office bearers and committee members for 2020-21. Nominations for new members of the committee will be very welcome – please consider joining your committee.

MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2020-21

Your committee has recommended that there be no change to the membership fees for this year. At the first General Meeting for 2020, on Friday 14th February, the following motion will be put to the members by the Treasurer, seconded by the Secretary:

> **Motion:** That membership fees for 2020/21 remain unchanged from 2019/20, at $35 for single member, $50 for family, $25 for single pensioner/student/concession, $35 for family pensioner/student/concession.

ROADSIDE CLEANUP

The first roadside clean up along the Pyrenees Highway will be held on Monday 17th February, starting at 9 am. Details from Geoff Harris.

NEWSLETTER

Please support your newsletter! More contributions are needed. If it interests you, it will interest others. Deadline for articles for the March issue of Castlemaine Naturalist is 28th of February.

Autumn Meeting of SEANA in Hamilton.

Following the Spring 2019 SEANA meeting in Castlemaine, the Hamilton FNC will be hosting the Autumn meeting over the weekend 17-19th April. ****Registration to attend this meeting closes on February 14th**. Copies of the first circular and registration form are available from Peter Turner.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists
Coming events

Fri Feb 14 meeting: speaker HARLEY DOUGLAS (See Page 6)

Sat Feb 15 field trip: Kalimna Park with Harley Douglas

Mon Feb 17: ROADSIDE CLEAN-UP - contact Geoff Harris

Fri Mar 13 meeting: Annual General Meeting, Election of office bearers
Speaker Prof. SUSAN LAWRENCE will discuss the impact of gold mining on our waterways

Sat Mar 14 field trip: Castlemaine Botanical Gardens Nature Reserve with Karl Just

Fri Apr 17* meeting: speaker LANA AUSTIN – genetic variation in the Eastern Yellow Robin [*Week 3 not week 2 due to Easter]

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website (Web master: Ron Wescott) - http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/

Subscriptions for 2019
Ordinary membership: Single $35, Family $50
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2019 Committee

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